124
115 that one would never believe that it was only a second-
191 ary language to him.

231 "You know," I said to the Mir, "one of the things
115 that I wanted to see when I came to Hunza was a yak. I understand from my readings that yaks are used in this part of the country and I have been looking everywhere as I walked along the road to Baltit, but I have as yet seen no sign of a yak!"

"That is not hard to explain," the Mir said. "The yaks are further up in the mountains. They cannot stand the heat and we keep them in the higher altitudes where they can be comfortable. If they are brought to the lower altitudes, they suffer. They like to be up around 11,000 feet or higher."

"Well, then how can I get up to see them?" I asked. "I don't mind if I have to walk for a day or two, but see them I must!"

"I'll do better than that," said the Mir. "I will phone and have two yaks brought down as quickly as possible. They will have to come from Passu which is about 38 miles from here. I will have action taken at once and see that the yaks are provided."

115 (Does that not indicate to you the kind of man and
124 host was the Mir of Hunza?)

I then took my leave of the Mir and the Rani and went out with Sultan Ali and Jahangir to look, see, pry and ask questions.

● 344 Our first jaunt was a good stiff climb to the old
644 palace located about two miles from the Mir's new palace. As the crow would fly I'm sure it would not have been more than ¾ of a mile. But in order to get up there one has to wend and weave and climb slowly.

I was now becoming quite accustomed to the altitude. Kerimabad is up about 8500 feet and I am sure

that the old palace is up at least another 500 or 600 feet. It was perched precariously on a huge outcropping of rock that jutted straight up into the air and the entire surface of the pinnacle was used for the building. There was no superfluous area surrounding it.

I had a long list of questions prepared and I knew even before I started that Sultan Ali could not give me all the answers because many of the questions were strictly horticultural—others dealt with dietary principles. I wanted to talk to farmers and individual people and housewives on both of these subjects.

I asked if he could arrange to take me to a group of farmers or even an individual farmer . . . that is, farmers who were capable and efficient—the better, the more intelligent and prosperous ones . . . so that I might delve into their ways and means of field husbandry.

He nodded, "This will be done. When would you like to talk to them?"

"Tomorrow morning, if it can be done," I replied.

"That's fine. I will arrange it!"

Wherever it was possible, I wanted to get my information direct from the people concerned. There is actually only one class of people in Hunza and one occupation, which is farming. I only know of one shop in the area and it sells mostly goods that have been brought in by the Chinese caravans that have passed through. I don't doubt also that there were some goods in this same shop that came into Hunza via Rawalpindi and Gilgit.

However, it was plain and clear that 900 of the citizens of Hunza out of 1000 made their living by means of farming. Therefore, as I had come to Hunza primarily to study the farming and horticultural methods of the people, the preparation of the foods they ate,

121 and of course the kinds and varieties of foods that were used, I attached great importance to this phase of my trip and I was definitely determined that, come what might, this information I would have thoroughly and in detail.

124 No doubt it would have been an advantage had I been able to speak either Urdu, or better still Burushaski, so that I could frame my questions as I saw fit and have answers that would be direct and would not require translation. However, that was not possible. Still, I had no reason to believe that my interpreter would not be a forthright individual who would give me the answers that were relayed to him clearly and to the point.

Mind you, I was seeking no miracle or world panacea. I wanted to find out the simple truth!

Further, I wanted to walk from farm to farm . . . that is, just selecting one at random here and there. I wanted to view the farmer's activities, study his soil and examine it, ask a few questions and thus, I could gather the information that I wanted and which was so vital to me.

344 644 The old palace proved to be in a good state of preservation. I wondered, because of its good condition, why someone didn't live there. Many of the rooms were still furnished. There were even rugs and tapestries placed and hung in their original positions.

[126] When we climbed to the top of the castle—that is, to the roof where I snapped many photos—it seemed mighty high and overlooked everything around us. But [133] in the distance were mountains that were well over 20,000 feet—and that is no exaggeration, but more likely an understatement.

There was a railing around this upper balcony and from this balcony you could walk into other chambers.

These chambers were once living rooms and bedrooms. 344
It reminded me of a penthouse. While it didn't have an 644
elevator to whiz you upwards in a matter of seconds or the best in modern plumbing, it did have the air, the view, the history and fascination that no penthouse in creation could match.

Back about 400 years ago one of the rulers of Hunza [173] married a daughter of the King of Baltistan who, as [648] a gift to his daughter and her husband, dispatched 500 workmen from his country to Hunza to erect the Baltit Fort that we now know. The rulers of Hunza dwelt in that fort and made it their palace until recent times. The present Mir, too, when he took office after the [712] death of his father, resided in this palace known as Baltit Fort.

The new palace, in which we were being wined, [122] dined and entertained, had been completed recently and was taken possession of by the present Mir about 7 years ago. Actually though, the new palace was started by the Mir's grandfather back as far as 1925.

While we were guests at the palace, extensive ma- sonry work was in progress as the Mir was having a broad, low, stone-walled veranda erected. This, I un- [692] derstand, would be used, on completion, as his court, [643] where the citizens of Hunza would come with their problems and where the Mir would preside in judg- ment.

However, this work in no way interfered with the [342] normal functions of the household, for, even as the people of Hunza follow the custom of moving upstairs for the summer and downstairs for the winter, so did the Mir.

To me, however, old Baltit Fort was an edifice of distinction, charm and beauty and if I were in the Mir's place, I would never have abandoned it.

344 644 712 727 [175] This massive old fortress, for that is what it was, was actually one of the places that had withstood the attacks of invaders for more than 400 years and remained impregnable. It has only once been in enemy hands since the day it was built and that was in 1891, when, after the Battle of Nilt, it was occupied by the British. Records further indicate that the British added no glory to their occupation at the time because of their indiscriminate looting of the treasures found in the palace. But the Mir, whether because of his friendship for the British or because of his desire to tell the truth, claimed that it was not the British who looted it, but the Dogra troops who were under British command.

344 644 352 Here I would like to quote from E. F. Knight's *Where Three Empires Meet:*

"This massive fortress, which has been for hundreds of years the secure stronghold of the robber kings, inviolate until this day, stands boldly out, set in the midst of a sublime landscape . . . Twigg, Boisragon and myself took up our quarters in the most comfortable chamber we could find, which we soon discovered to have been the apartment of the ladies belonging to the [643] Thum's harem. ("Thum" is Burushaski for ruler, sovereign, king, chief, "Mir". Used especially of the hereditary rulers of the states of Hunza and Nagir.) It was surrounded by a low, broad, wooden divan, on which our bedding was laid. Pillars of carved wood rose from the edge of the divan to the carved beams of the roof, blackened by the smoke of ages. . . . A fire was lit in the open fireplace at one end of the floor, the smoke escaping through a square hole in the roof. Save for the Oriental pattern of the wooden carvings it was just a hall, I imagine, as King Canute might have lived in. . . . We enjoyed a delicious night's rest after our late fatigues.

7:Tobe C, T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

"We were up betimes on December 23rd, and proceeded to rummage all the nooks and corners of the deserted palace. We had heard that the treasures of many a pillaged caravan . . . were stored here, so the search was an exciting one. The tribesmen had been informed that, provided they gave up their arms, their property would be respected by us. . . But the possessions of the fugitive Thum were declared to be forfeited, so we set to work to collect together all the valuables that were to be found in the place, individual looting being of course forbidden. . . . We were informed that the Thum had made all his preparations for flight long before his defeat at Nilt, and . . . had carried off the bulk of his wealth with him across the Hindoo Koosh. . . . Still, they had not taken all, and we raked together a curious and miscellaneous collection of odds and ends scattered about and secreted away in the various chambers and cellars."

On two sides this mighty fortress (and it is a mighty fortress for that part of the world) is protected by abysses.

As the views of the mountains and the surrounding country from the balconies were unrivaled, I took many colored photographs and with each click of the shutter I hoped for the best.

I noticed a marvelous old firing piece, gun or matchlock. I don't know how to describe these things as I am not very familiar with firearms. However, I found out that this was a genuine treasure and was almost as old as the fort itself.

It was a most unusual firing piece. By actual measurement it was 6 feet long, elegantly and extravagantly decorated with silver and gold, and bore the inscription "946 A.H."

What had evidently been an old calendar portray-

of the Aga Khan and his wife in various poses and stages of his life. I had given some study to these photographs and many of them were inscribed in the hand of the Aga Khan with endearing terms to his friend, Jamal.

Our quarters were in the guest house—actually adjoining the palace but on a higher level. This building had been erected by the Mir's grandfather back in 1925. It was a well-built, handsome structure, firmly ensconced on a high rocky ledge of granite.

You walked down the Mir's long staircase from the sun room, then you walked up half a dozen or more stone steps, forward a few feet and then you climbed up a circular, enclosed wooden staircase to the guest quarters. These consisted of a large, comfortable sitting room with many easy chairs and a fine writing desk, a large bedroom with two comfortable beds and further on was the bathroom. Then to the right of the lovely sitting room was a balcony—spacious and inviting. From it you could view Rakaposhi and all its splendor and gorgeous loveliness.

The furniture all round was similar to that which you would find in the average better-class American homes. Photographs adorned the walls, among which were the photos of the old Aga Khan and his French wife.

When I mentioned the Aga Khan to the Mir, he waxed eloquent and his face beamed and he said, "Not only was I fond of him—not only did I love him—but we were close intimate friends. He was the most generous of men and especially to the people of Hunza. I revere his memory! He was a wonderful person. We really miss him since his passing. His ancestors came from Persia to India in 1834. In 1934, one hundred years later, to celebrate the jubilee of the founding of

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

CHAPTER 33

The Mir's Summer Cottage

ALTIT FORT has quite a history. I believe it to be the most historic and most important edifice in all of Hunza. Records that have been handed down would indicate that the fort was about 700 years old and it was erected like a perch, right on a sharp bank of the Hunza River, on what was originally a sharp gigantic precipice.

It may be smaller and perhaps simpler in construction than the larger fort at Baltit, but I thought it was big enough after I walked all around it and went in and out of all its chambers. Then, too, it is much larger now than it was in those days because the present Mir had a new wing erected so that when he holds court and carries out the seed-sowing ceremony, there will be plenty of room for his family, guests and visitors.

I gained the impression that it was a tight little fortress—well built from blocks of rock, expertly

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712 wedged together to form a formidable protection against invaders of their day.

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643 'Tis for the Festival of the Bopfau, which is the Burushaski name given to the barley-seed-sowing festival, that the Mir comes dressed in all his regal finery and robes of state to practice a ritual that has been carried on for hundreds of years by the Mirs of Hunza.

[173] It would appear this ceremony is a carry-over from that performed by the ancient Greeks and the people of Hunza like to emphasize this, as though forging another link in the chain of evidence that would tie them in as descendants of Alexander the Great.

[292] On this occasion the Mir wears a magnificent gown with a wide belt fastened around his waist, in harmony with the gold brocade that bedecks the gown. At his side he carries the ceremonial sword in a carved ivory scabbard. He makes a most imposing, handsome figure with his head crowned with a clerical cap with flowing egret feathers held in place by a large golden pin. The Mir's brother, Ayesh, and the Mir's eldest son, the heir apparent, come similarly attired.

With an assembled crowd watching, the Mir drives a plough pulled by two oxen or a yak down and back along the field and into this furrow he sprinkles seed mixed with gold dust. The ceremony is repeated three times and then the Mir throws handfuls of the seed [789] into the air. Fable has it that if anyone catches a grain of seed and takes it home and mixes it with his own seed, he will be assured of a fine harvest.

The seed-sowing ceremony is not only performed at Altit but in two other Hunzan villages so that the Hunzan farmers can come and catch a seed to insure themselves of plenty for the following year. By doing it in three different locations, it means that no Hunzan farmer will have to walk more than a few miles to partake of the Mir's blessings.

partake of the Mir's blessings.

In comparing the fort at Altit and the one at Baltit, I gained the impression that the one at Altit had more rooms . . . smaller ones they were, but there seemed to be more of them. The old fort at Baltit was much larger and more impressive. Yet somehow I became more attached to the Altit Fort. I had the impression that it was almost impregnable.

Then I recalled the true story of the capture of the fort by the British and, after appraising its isolation, strength and precipitous banks and sides, I thought to myself, "Any group of men who had the courage to attempt to scale and capture any fort in Hunza deserved a lot more glory and loot than they would ever get in Hunza . . . and that is for certain!"

On one of the balconies stood a man with a bowl of apricots and Sultan Ali said, "This man is the chowkidor, or guardian, of the fort and it is customary to give him a gift."

"Of what?" I asked.

"Oh, about 10 rupees," replied Sultan Ali.

Jahangir almost jumped a foot when he heard that and he said, "For what? He hasn't done anything and we haven't eaten any of his apricots."

"Well," Sultan Ali said, "it's just customary!"

"Customary or no," said Jahangir, "I think it's ridiculous!"

I turned to Sultan Ali and said, "Normally I'd be glad to give him the tip that you suggest, but the truth of the matter is my fund of Pakistan rupees is just about nonexistent. When we set out for Hunza from Pindi we calculated in advance approximately how many rupees we would need and then we added on 100 extra, and that's what we came with.

"From the stories that we read and from the infor-

124 mation that we could gather, we were under the im-
122 pression that no money was used in Hunza. Therefore we didn't calculate on spending any. So far we have parted with approximately 300 rupees and to place the matter squarely in front of you, we don't have enough money to buy our plane tickets back from Gilgit to Rawalpindi! I'm hoping we'll be able to get some money at the bank in Gilgit because I did notice that there's a bank there, so I'm afraid I'll have to pass up the 10 rupees that I'm supposed to give the chowkidor of the fort. But tell him I enjoyed my visit to the fort very much anyway!"

● 344 While we were wandering around on the open bal-
644 cony of the old fort, Sultan Ali pointed to a neat looking place down below, but not far distant, and said, "That is the Mir's picnic place, where he comes every Saturday evening with his family. He stays there Sunday and Monday, returning to the palace for his various duties Monday evening. This practice is followed during the summer months."

"Well," I replied, "that's a custom that's followed pretty well in the West and probably in most places around the world . . . where one tries to get away from the usual home conditions and seeks refuge in a cottage. We, generally speaking, call this our summer cottage. And you know what? Many folks and families travel hundreds of miles just for the weekend, just as long as they can get away from home and the sameness of living for a few days at a time!"

"I guess we've seen everything here at the old fort worth seeing. So let's go down and make for the Mir's picnic place," I said as I headed for the stairs.

It was a walk of but a few hundred yards and we were soon at the garden gate of the bungalow. Sultan Ali spoke in Burushaski to one of the chowkidors who

produced a key and opened the door.

Soon I was wandering through the well-appointed summer cottage. It was neat, tidy, clean and solidly built but of course it was not on par with the palace—nor would one expect it to be. After all, as mentioned, it was but a weekend spot and what we would call a summer cottage back home. Yet, of course, it was much nicer than the average summer cottage, but not as good as some of our elegant ones back home.

I was rather surprised and quite amused to note that the walls were covered rather widely with shiny lithographed pictures . . . yes, it was good printing or lithographing work. The pictures were obviously put out by the Chinese communist government and everywhere they showed workers and working girls with beaming faces, wearing good clothes and looking prosperous, but no one could doubt that these pictures were splendid specimens of communist propaganda.

One of the most effective pictures for propaganda purposes, I gathered, was one that showed the happy beaming faces of whites, yellows, blacks—all mixed and enjoying life together.

At first I thought that the Mir couldn't have known about these pictures hanging in his bungalow, but then I gathered that he must know about them. Evidently he doesn't fear them or worry about them. Perhaps he knows his people better than anyone else.

I do not have to go into a long discourse to prove to myself or to anyone else that the Mir does not have communistic leanings because communism would quickly and definitely stamp out any form of absolute rule like his Mirship. Yet I can also see the absolute necessity of the Mir keeping on friendly terms and not antagonizing either the Russian or the Chinese Communists. Then to make the situation even more hazard-

115 Now I didn't see his birth certificate and I might as
165 well tell you, right here and now, that no vital statistics are kept in Hunza. I accept the figure of his age as he told me but remember, I was not there at the time of his birth!

344 When I was through with my spasm of inspection
644 and admiration, we began to parade up the long driveway that led into the Mir's garden. This area is flanked on the right by space that looks as though it were a parking lot, and maybe that's exactly what it is, but instead of cars, the guests or members of the family park—or should I say tether—their horses and yaks in this area. Maybe now they park their jeeps there.
[493] The Mir owns two of them, but one, I understand, was away in Pindi being repaired. (Or was it the shambles and horrible wreck of a jeep that I came across a week later, on the road back to Gilgit?)

126 Now I noticed that the Mir, Ayesh, the doctor and Cec were coming along the roadway to meet us, and soon we joined forces and were gathered in one group. I thought this was the ideal time to take some photographs and, luckily for us, they were the best photographs we took on the entire trip. Photography is something that has never interested me and I had never
[122] taken half a dozen pictures in my life. Before leaving home, I did try to learn a bit about photography, but I couldn't learn enough fast enough.

124 When the fun, excitement and fast-flowing humorous remarks had subsided, I said to the Mir, "If you've nothing more important to do or if you would care to give me a little more of your time, we could start that question and answer session that I arranged with you for this afternoon."

"I am at your service," he replied pleasantly and with alacrity.

misdemeanors on the scale that we know them in the Western world are practically unknown in Hunza. That being the case, it behooves us to investigate and study family life in Hunza, for juvenile delinquency is becoming a very serious and ever broadening problem in America.

I saw samples of Hunzan justice. Its simplicity made me weep . . . when I recalled our procrastinating, shackled, unwieldy, judicial system. In the Western world civil cases take months and even years to be heard in court before a judge. In Hunza there are so few cases of wrongdoings, or even individual or family problems, that a hearing can be arranged almost immediately.

Petty squabbles or differences between husband and wife or even other disputes can be brought before the Wazir or before the Mir in private. When something more serious is at stake, the grieved party or parties bring their case to the "morning durbar," which is held regularly in the courtyard surrounded by the beautiful gardens at the entrance to the Mir's palace. At the time I was at Baltit many workmen were busily engaged in erecting a large stone enclosure or balcony where the "durbars" will be held, allowing more room for spectators and greater comfort for the counsel.

During the proceedings the Mir sits comfortably ensconced on a square-shaped wooden divan, luxuriantly smothered in rugs, fancy cushions and tapestries. There is none of the strict court procedure or dourness and frigidity known to our Western judiciary system. Here one feels that he is talking to a friend—a fellow citizen—or at least, an acquaintance.

Perhaps we have carried our ideas of justice, freedom and democracy a bit too far. In order that everyone may be afforded justice and fair treatment at the hands

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Hunza
[P.39-A]

Hunza in the Himalayas

Storied Shangri-La undergoes scrutiny

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TERRACED country, *left*, is ruled by the Mir, shown with village chiefs, above, at his palace at 8,000 foot altitude. Background peaks exceed 20,000 feet.